

**DISPOSABLE CONTAINERS HAVING AN INDIVIDUALIZING
PORTION TO ENCOURAGE REUSE AND REDUCE WASTE**

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BACKGROUND

1. Technical Field

The present invention relates, generally, to disposable containers. More specifically, the present invention is directed to a disposable
10 container having an image capable of being personalized by a user by scratching and/or depressing at least a portion of the image.

2. Discussion of Related Art

Disposable containers, such as Styrofoam containers and dinnerware,
15 are a part of everyday life. For example, disposable containers are used for all types of occasions, e.g., barbeques, parties, etc. The disposable containers are popular because of their versatility, e.g., being able to hold hot and cold liquids or hot and cold food. In addition, since the disposable
containers are discarded into the trash after use, it makes clean-up after a
20 party or a barbeque easy because there is no washing of dinnerware or cups after the event.

Even though the disposable containers are great for barbeques and parties, these containers generate a lot of waste. Since these containers are generally the same shape, size, and color, a person cannot distinguish one container from another container. And, the person tends to use multiple
5 containers because there is no way to distinguish one container from another container. For example, if a person places their cup down on a table amongst other cups, one usually cannot distinguish their cup from the other cups on the table. Thus, the person reaches for a new cup thereby leaving behind the other cup and generating more waste.

10 Therefore, a need exists for a person attending a party or barbeque to be able to personalize a disposable container to distinguish their disposable containers from other containers so that one may be able to use the same container several times before discarding it into the trash and thereby reducing waste.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

15 The present invention provides a disposable container having an image capable of being personalized by a user by scratching and/or depressing a portion of the image to foster reuse of disposable containers
20 and reduce waste.

According to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, a disposable container comprises a bottom portion, a sidewall portion extending up from the bottom portion defining a cavity capable of holding a substance and an upper portion of the sidewall defining an opening
5 through which the substance can be placed within and withdrawn from the cavity, wherein the sidewall portion has an inner and an outer surface, and an image is disposed on the outer surface of the sidewall portion, and wherein the image can be scratched and/or depressed along any portion of the image by a user thereby personalizing said container.

10 In addition, the image of the disposable container may include an alpha character, a numerical character, artwork, or any combination thereof. And, the image may protrude from the outer surface of the sidewall portion, recessed into the outer surface of the sidewall portion, or any combination thereof.

15 According to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention, a method for making a cup having a portion of said cup capable of being individualized by a user of said cup, said method comprising the steps of forming said cup including a base, a sidewall having an outer surface extending up from the base to define a liquid holding cavity and an image,
20 wherein said image is disposed at a predetermined area on the outer surface

of the sidewall of said cup, and wherein the image is formed such that any portion of said image can be scratched and/or depressed by a user thereby personalizing said cup.

In addition, the image may include an alpha character, a numerical character, artwork, or any combination thereof. And, the image may protrude from the outer surface of the sidewall, recess into the outer surface of the sidewall, or any combination thereof.

Further, the method may also include the step of forming a rim on the upper surface of the sidewall of said cup that defines an opening for filling and withdrawing a liquid from the liquid holding cavity, and the outer surface of the sidewall is extended to include an outer surface of the rim.

Furthermore, the predetermined area of said cup formed by the method above may include the outer surface of the sidewall about the rim, any portion of the outer surface of the sidewall between the base and the rim, or any combination thereof.

According to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention, a mold for making a Styrofoam cup which includes a base, a sidewall extending from the base to define a cavity for holding a liquid, and a rim formed along the top portion of the sidewall that defines an opening for filling and withdrawing a liquid from the cavity, and further comprises an

image portion disposed on a predetermined area on an outer surface of the cup, wherein the image portion is formed such that the image can be scratched and/or depressed by a user.

In addition, the predetermined area of the cup may include the outer surface of the rim, a portion of an area on the outer surface of the cup between the base and the rim, or any combination thereof.

Further, the image of the cup may include an alpha character, a numerical character, artwork, or any combination thereof. And, the image can be formed such that the image protrudes from the outer surface of the cup, recesses into the outer surface of the cup, or any combination thereof.

According to yet another exemplary embodiment of the present invention, a plate is formed having a rim, a food carrying surface, and an angular wall having an upper surface disposed between the rim and the food carrying surface. In addition, the angular wall is formed such that it aides in holding food on the food carrying surface. Further, the plate includes an image section disposed on the upper surface of the angular wall, wherein the image depicted includes alpha-numeric characters. It should be further understood that the image can comprise alpha characters, numerical characters, artwork, or any combination thereof. The image can also protrude from or recess into the angular wall of the plate, or any combination thereof.

Further, a user of the disposable plate can depress or scratch-off, or any combination thereof, any portion of the image disposed thereon to personalize the disposable plate. This allows the user of the plate to reuse the disposable plate because the user will be able to distinguish their plate from other plates by its distinguishing scratches and/or depressions, thereby fostering reuse and eliminating waste.

These and other embodiments, features, aspects, and advantages of the present invention will be described and become apparent from the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a side view of a disposable cup having an image, according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 2 is an exploded view of the image depicted in Figure 1, according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 3 is a side view of a disposable cup having an image, according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 4 is an exploded view of the image depicted in Figure 3, according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 5 is a side view of a disposable cup having an image, according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 6 is a top view of disposable dinnerware having an image, according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

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DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention will now be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which preferred embodiments of the invention are shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in different forms and should not be constructed as limited to the
10 embodiments set forth herein. Rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the scope of the invention to those skilled in the art.

The present invention relates to a disposable container having an
15 image capable of being personalized by a user of the disposable container to distinguish the user's container from similar containers thereby encouraging reuse and reducing waste.

Figure 1 is a side view of a disposable cup having an image, according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention. Referring
20 to Figure 1, a cup 10 is formed having a rim 12, a body 14, and a base 16. In addition, the cup includes an outer sidewall 18 extending from a bottom of the base 16 to a top portion of the rim 12, and an opening 24 is defined

by the rim 12. The cup 10 also includes an image section 20 disposed on the outer surface of the rim 12, wherein the image 20 depicted includes alpha-numeric characters. It should be further understood that the image 20 can comprise alpha characters, numerical characters, artwork, or any combination thereof. The image 20 can also protrude from or recess into the sidewall of the cup, or any combination thereof.

The image 20, as shown in Figure 1, can be personalized by a user of the cup 10. The user can scratch and/or depress any portion of the image 20 thereby individualizing and being able to distinguish the cup from the same or similar type of disposable containers. For instance, Figure 2 is an exploded side view of the image 20 as shown in Figure 1. Referring to Figure 2, a user can depress any portion of the image 20 (such as the letter X (26) as depicted in Figure 2), a user can scratch-off any portion of the image 20 (such as the number 2 (28) depicted in Figure 2 as missing), or any combination thereof, to personalize the disposable cup 10. A user can scratch and/or depress any portion of the disposable cup 10 he or she desires to personalize the disposable cup 10. Thus, the user can then reuse the disposable cup 10 because a user will be able to distinguish their cup by its distinguishing scratches and/or depressions thereby fostering reuse and eliminating waste.

Figure 3 is a side view of a disposable cup having an image, according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention. Now

Referring to Figure 3, the disposable cup 10 depicted in Figure 3 has the same components as the disposable cup 10 depicted in Figure 1 except that the image portion 22 is disposed on the body 14 of the disposable cup 10. The image 22 of the disposable cup 10 is depicted having alpha-numerical characters. It should be further understood that image 22 can also include alpha characters, numerical characters, artwork, or any combination thereof. The image 22 can also protrude from or recess into the sidewall of the cup, or any combination thereof.

The image 22, as shown in Figure 3, can be personalized by a user of the cup 10. The user can scratch and/or depress any portion of the image 22 to individualize the cup 10 and to distinguish it from the same or similar types of disposable containers.

Figure 4 is an exploded view of the image depicted in Figure 3, according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention. Referring to Figure 4, a user can depress any portion of the image 22 (such as the letter F (40) as depicted in Figure 4), a user can scratch-off any portion of the image 22 (such as the number 2 (42) depicted in Figure 4 as missing), or any combination thereof, to personalize the disposable cup 10. A user can scratch and/or depress any portion of the disposable cup 10 he or she desires to personalize the disposable cup 10. Thus, the user can then reuse the disposable cup 10 because of its distinguishing scratches and/or depressions thereby fostering reuse and eliminating waste.

Figure 5 is a side view of a disposable cup having an image, according to another exemplary embodiment of the present. Referring to Figure 5, the disposable cup 10 depicted in Figure 5 has the same components and features as the disposable cup 10 depicted in Figure 1 except that the image portion 22' includes art work instead of alpha-numerical characters.

It should be further understood that the image portion of the cup can be located on the outer surface of the body of the cup, the outer surface of the rim of the cup, or any combination thereof.

According to another embodiment of the present invention, a mold for making a cup having an image section capable of being individualized by a user of said cup, the mold comprises a shape of said cup including a sidewall having an outer surface and an image, wherein said image is formed by modifying the mold to include said image, and wherein said image is disposed at a predetermined portion on the outer surface of the sidewall of said cup. It should be further understood that any of the exemplary embodiments and features thereof discussed above may be incorporated in a mold for making a disposable cup having an image.

Figure 6 is a top view of a disposable container having an image, according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention. Referring to Figure 6, a plate 60 is formed having a rim 62, a food carrying surface 66, and an angular wall 64 having an upper surface disposed

between the rim 62 and the food carrying surface 66. In addition, the angular wall 64 is formed such that it aides in holding food on the food carrying surface 66. Further, the plate 60 includes an image section 68 disposed on the upper surface of the angular wall 64, wherein the image 68 depicted includes alpha-numeric characters. It should be further understood that the image 68 can comprise alpha characters, numerical characters, artwork, or any combination thereof. The image 68 can also protrude from or recess into the angular wall 64 of the plate 60, or any combination thereof.

Further, a user can depress or scratch-off any portion of the image 68, or any combination thereof, to personalize the disposable plate 60. Thus, the user can then reuse the disposable plate 60 because a user will be able to distinguish their plate from other plates by its distinguishing scratches and/or depressions thereby fostering reuse and eliminating waste.

It is to be understood that the image section 68 may cover a portion of the angular wall 64 or the entire angular wall 64.

It is also to be understood that the image portion 68 may be disposed along any portion of or the entire rim 62 depicted in Figure 6. It is to be further understood that the plate 60 depicted in Figure 6 is not meant to limit the invention. Rather, the plate 60 represents an exemplary embodiment of the present invention and that all types of disposable

dinnerware, such as bowls, may include the exemplary embodiments discussed above.

Further, it is to be understood that of the exemplary embodiments of the present invention discussed above may be incorporated in any disposable container, such as cups, plates, bowls, and etc.

While the present invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to preferred embodiments thereof, it will be understood by those of ordinary skill in the art that various changes in form and detail may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention as defined by the following claims.